

East Hendred Catholic Parish

Four Candles

13th December – 18th December 2020



Third Week of Advent

Gaudete, Rejoice!

Gaudete, Rejoice!

THE STRANGE and wonderful season of Advent continues: delivery vans hurtle round the streets, bringing people their Christmas shopping; trees and lights, cards and letters, 'phone calls and Zoom calls all point to a celebration, which for committed Christians lies a fortnight ahead but which for others is already underway. Nevertheless, on Advent 3, the Church says 'Gaudete!', the Lord is at hand.

Booking for Christmas services continues. The deadline is Sunday 13th. So, on Monday 14th, we shall allocate the places. When you receive this bulletin, there will still be time to fill in the Google Poll we sent out, or to reply to the e-mail, or to contact hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk. It is also possible to 'phone me on 01235 835038. There are two Christmas masses on Christmas Eve (4pm and 8pm) as well as two on Christmas Day (9.30am and 11.15am). There is also the Christmas Candle Lighting between 6pm and 7pm on Christmas Eve. Further details below.

I am not being unecumenical but I do feel that Catholics have one distinct advantage, psychologically, over other Christians: we are much more used to services without music. This means that the prohibition on congregational singing is slightly less unnerving for us than for many. Also the requirement that services are short rather than lengthy works well for Catholics. Nevertheless, Christmas would not feel like Christmas without some music and we shall do our best to find some suitable material for a soundscape.

Meanwhile many are being helped by our live-stream Mass. Most days over 100 watch Mass – not counting those who flick through the channels and are with us only momentarily. We shall get better at working with ChurchServicesTV live-stream and I urge you to discover how to tune in. The link is on our web-site, www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk and I am pleased to discover that some who are not IT literate are helped by family or friends to find the link. Because of Christmas postal difficulties and impending holidays, the weekly bulletin is not being posted out after this week.

Fr Andrew

East Hendred Catholic Parish



**Third Sunday of Advent
(Year B)
13th December 2020**

**Antiphons,
Prayers and Readings**

Entrance Antiphon

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.

Gaudete

Phil 4:4-5

Advent Wreath III

Blessed are you, sovereign Lord, just and true: to you be praise and glory for ever. Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth as a burning and shining light. May we your servants rejoice in his light, and so be led to witness to him who is the Lord of our coming kingdom, Jesus our Saviour and King of the ages.

Collect

O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity; enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever

First Reading

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11 (RSV)

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good tidings to the afflicted;
he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;...
¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my soul shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots,

and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring forth before all the nations.

Magnificat *Luke 1:46-50, 53-54 R/ Is 61:10*

R/ My soul rejoices in my God.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour
for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed. **R/**

The Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation. **R/**

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy. **R/**

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 (RSV)

Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray constantly, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit, ²⁰ do not despise prophesying, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good, ²² abstain from every form of evil. ²³ May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

Alleluia

Alleluia, alleluia! The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor. Alleluia!

Gospel

John 1:6-8, 19-28 (RSV)

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light...¹⁹ And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' ²⁰ He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ.' ²¹ And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Eli'jah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' And he answered, 'No.' ²² They said to him then, 'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?' ²³ He said, 'I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said.' ²⁴ Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

²⁵ They asked him, 'Then why are you baptizing, if you are neither the Christ, nor Eli'jah, nor the prophet?' ²⁶ John answered them, 'I baptize with water; but among you stands one whom you do not know, ²⁷ even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.' ²⁸ This took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Prayer over the Offerings

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray, be offered to you unceasingly, to complete what was begun in sacred mystery and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work. Through Christ our Lord.

Preface

(II De Adventu: De duplici exspectatione Christi)

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord. For all the oracles of the prophets foretold him, the Virgin Mary longed for him with love beyond all telling. John the Baptist sang of his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came. It is by his gift that already we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in praise. And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy &c.

Communion Antiphon

Dicite: Pusillanimes

Say to the faint of heart; Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us. *Cf Is 35:4*

Or

Cantor (1st time)

Drop down ye heavens from above,

Full

and let the skies pour down righteousness.

Prayer after Communion

We implore your mercy, Lord, that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults and prepare us for the coming feasts. Through Christ our Lord.

Scripture Reading

M 14th December	Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17	Matthew 21:23-27
T 15th December	Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13	Matthew 21:28-32
W 16th December	Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25	Luke 7:18b-23

Readings for the 'Great Os' (17th-24th December)

17th O Sapientia	Genesis 49:2, 8-10	Matthew 1:1-17
18th O Adonai	Jeremiah 23:5-8	Matthew 1:18-24
19th O Radix	Judges 13:2-7, 24-25	Luke 1:5-25
*20th O Clavis	Isaiah 7:10-14	Luke 1:26-38
21st O Oriens	Song of Songs 2:8-14	Luke 1:39-45
22nd O Rex	1 Samuel 1:24-28	Luke 1:46-56
23rd O Emmanuel	Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24	Luke 1:57-66
24th Christmas Eve (<i>am</i>)	2 Sam. 7:1-5, 8-12, 14,16	Luke 1:67-79

ADVENT 4B	2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12, 14,16	
20th December	Romans 16:25-27	Luke 1:26-38

* The readings for 20th December are replaced in Church by the Sunday readings.

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NOTICEBOARD

HOLY FATHER'S DECEMBER PRAYER INTENTION

We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the World of God and a life of prayer.

THE SICK AND THOSE IN NEED

Baby Martha, John Castle, Petal Connell, Daniel Cuevas, Rose Millet, John Stringer, Louise Woodhouse, Sr Catherine, Mary Wallace, Brenda Paddon, Angus Clark, Karen Greig, Kitty Teasdale, Mary Mc Nichol, Andrew Gunn, Elizabeth Gunn, Des McNichol, Christine Robinson, Rose

THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

Week 13th-19th Dec: Harry Wells, Charles Hunt, Margaret Ann Crossman, Lawrence Roberts, Patricia Mary Tonge, Isabelle Langley, Mary Thorne, Betarice Cahill, Kathleen Wood.

THE YEAR OF THE WORD

Following the disruption caused by COVID-19, Bishop Philip has extended 'The Year of the Word' until 30th September 2021. In short, we shall continue with our intense Scripture programme till then.

GIVING

To help with supplying the Didcot Foodbank, contact Veronica Paget: veronicapaget@hotmail.com or leave suitable food outside her front door. Jackymattam@btinternet.com helps with the poor locally.

MISSIO The Red Box Collection for 2020 has been sent in. £701.83. Thanks to Margaret Maytham for overseeing this. Must get mine sorted.....

TO GIVE TO OUR PARISH BY REGULAR STANDING ORDER OR GIFT

BANK DETAILS: PRCDTR East Hendred, St Mary

Sort Code: 309304 Account Number: 00877183

To arrange Gift Aid, contact : hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk



Buy a few Christmas dinners and help for the homeless:

<https://www.crisis.org.uk/>

CHILDREN CELEBRATE

Our Team have produced resources, which are available at the back of St Mary's. See also www.hendredcatholicparish.org.uk and the link below.



CLG Advent Booklet 2020.pdf

Children's liturgy for the Third Sunday of Advent (Year B)

- Third Sunday of Advent (Year B) activity sheet [\(pdf, 2mb\)](#)

See also:

www.cafod.org.uk/childrensliturgy

Children's liturgy general guidelines [\(doc, 59kb\)](#)



CAFOD World Gifts

This Christmas why not buy gifts that will change lives and bring happiness! CAFOD's World Gifts are a range of virtual gifts that transform the lives of those living in poverty overseas. New gifts this year included Keep Clean £6 (soap and washing powder for family) and Emergency Food £50 so please look on line at:

<https://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk/>

emmaus OXFORD Donations to their Christmas Challenge can be doubled through the Big Give. More details <https://emmaus.org.uk/oxford/>

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ST MARY'S

CHRISTMAS EVE

4pm Vigil Mass of Christmas

6pm-7pm Christmas Candle Lighting

Everyone of any religion or none is invited to visit St Mary's Church to light a candle between 6 and 7PM. At the entrance of the Church you can collect a candle (which will not have been handled by anyone) and you will be guided to light it from a pillar candle by the door then walk slowly towards the altar and place it on the table in front of the altar, then leave the Church following the one-way route. Please note - you are asked to wear a mask and keep 2 metres distance from others not in your own household group. Children are welcome also, if they can be supervised to not touch anything please, as this will take place between Masses. If you would like a candle to be lit in the Church on Christmas Eve for someone in particular, who cannot visit, please advise by emailing hendred@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk or calling 01235 835038 (before 20th Dec) with a first name which will be written on a candle and lit on your behalf. There is no charge for candles, however any online contributions via St Mary's Parish website: [Hendred Catholic Parish](#) 'donate' button are most gratefully received.

8pm Mass of Christmas Night

CHRISTMAS DAY

9.30am Mass of Christmas Day (1)

11.15am Mass of Christmas Day (2)

Saturday 26th December (St Stephen) No Mass

Sunday 27th December (Holy Family) 9.30am Mass (No 11.15am)

The Divine Office

The People of God share in different ways in the daily recitation of the Divine Office. The Office of Readings (sometimes called 'Vigils' or 'Matins') used to be a night time provision. Nowadays it takes place early in the morning but may be scheduled for any convenient time of day. To this, religious add the minor hours of Terce (approx. 9am), Sext (approx. 12 noon), None (approx. 3pm), and Compline (late evening). Those not in religious communities are able to replace Terce, Sext, and None with a short Midday Office. The major hours are Lauds (Morning Prayer) and Vespers (Evening Prayer), each climaxing with a Gospel Canticle, the Song of Zechariah (*'Benedictus'*) in the morning and the Song of Our Lady (*'Magnificat'*) in the evening. It is these major hours, which the Second Vatican Council called 'the hinges' (*'cardines'*) of the Divine Office and it is these major hours which the whole People of God are to share.

It is not an easy time to buy Office Books, which are all being revised. Stocks are low if not non-existent. Many people now make use of an app and read the Office on an iPad or iPhone. Google <https://universalis.com> for material and help with dealing it. There are some basic decisions: the version on the internet is free but uses its own translation to avoid problems of copyright; the version as an iPhone or android app costs about £10 (one-off single payment) and that allows one to use the proper texts. There are also options: to use Revised Standard Version (as we do in East Hendred); to listen to the Office read and sung &c.

Universalis as it describes itself

Martin Kochanski who runs the site writes:

"[Universalis] is the biggest present there can be, because it changes lives, and it lasts for ever. A Universalis registration code costs £19.99... It gives the recipient all the Mass readings for every day, forever, and all the Hours of the Liturgy of the Hours for every day, forever. There are also benefits such as the daily 'About Today' pages, with their stories of the saints and their illustrations. The registration code works on whatever devices your friend has – Android and iPhone/iPad/iPod Touch and Mac and Windows – and also for making personal e-books. It is very simple indeed to give a Universalis registration code as a present. [Our blog post gives all the details.](#)"

FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

14th– 19th December 2020

Advent Week 3

Monday in the Third Week of Advent

14th December

Reading

Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17

A star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a sceptre out of Israel

And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and saw Israel encamping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him, ³ and he took up his discourse, and said,

'The oracle of Balaam the son of Be'or,
the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
⁴ the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,
falling down, but having his eyes uncovered:
⁵ How fair are your tents, O Jacob,
your encampments, O Israel!
⁶ Like valleys that stretch afar,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes that the LORD has planted,
like cedar trees beside the waters.
⁷ Water shall flow from his buckets,
and his seed shall be in many waters,
his king shall be higher than Agag,
and his kingdom shall be exalted.....

¹⁵ And he took up his discourse, and said,
“The oracle of Balaam the son of Be’or,
the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
¹⁶ the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
and knows the knowledge of the Most High,
who sees the vision of the Almighty,
falling down, but having his eyes uncovered:
¹⁷ I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not nigh:
a star shall come forth out of Jacob,
and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel.

REFLECTION

HAVING spent much of Advent with Isaiah’s prophecies featuring as the Old Testament reading, today we begin to explore material in other books relevant to the coming Kingdom of the Messiah. We begin with the Book of Numbers and the strange and primitive story of Balaam (Numbers 22-24). Balaam is a gentile prophet from pre-history: the story of Balaam and his talking donkey is told as a fable in chapter 22. We are now in chapter 24 and back to a more historical mode. Balak the King of Moab is warned by Balaam the prophet that a future ruler of Israel will crush the Moabites. This prophecy will true in the tenth century BC when King David vanquishes Moab and makes it a vassal state. Early Christian writers saw in Balaam’s prophecy to Balak a reference to the coming of Christ, especially pertinent because Jesus is seen as King in David’s house and lineage.

Tuesday in the Third Week of Advent

15th December

Reading

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13

The Wickedness of Jerusalem

Woe to her that is rebellious and defiled,
the oppressing city!

² She listens to no voice,
she accepts no correction.
She does not trust in the LORD,
she does not draw near to her God....

⁹ 'Yes, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples
to a pure speech,
that all of them may call on the name of the LORD
and serve him with one accord.

¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia
my suppliants, the daughter of my dispersed ones,
shall bring my offering.

¹¹ 'On that day you shall not be put to shame
because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me;
for then I will remove from your midst
your proudly exultant ones,
and you shall no longer be haughty
in my holy mountain.

¹² For I will leave in the midst of you
a people humble and lowly.
They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD,

¹³ those who are left in Israel;
they shall do no wrong
and utter no lies,
nor shall there be found in their mouth
a deceitful tongue.
For they shall pasture and lie down,
and none shall make them afraid.'

Reflection

ZEPHANIAH, like other prophets, was preaching before the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity – so before 587 BC. He is linked with the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BC) and at the time the Assyrians were the dominant power in the region, though their power was declining. Zephaniah's proclamations are full of metaphors and similes and his

reproaches in chapter 3 are directed towards Judah and the wickedness of Jerusalem. The prophet concludes by suggesting that in the end there will be a faithful remnant, a holy people. This notion of a faithful remnant is a strong theme in the prophetic literature and it is later seen by Christians in terms of the Kingdom of God. Those who respond to the call to repentance and the life of the baptised belong to and pray and work for the coming Kingdom, inaugurated by the Messiah.

Wednesday in the Third Week of Advent

16th December

Reading

Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21-25

*Showers, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness*

I am the LORD, and there is no other.

⁷ I form light and create darkness,

I make weal and create woe,

I am the LORD, who do all these things.

⁸ Showers, O heavens, from above,

and let the skies rain down righteousness;

let the earth open, that salvation may sprout forth,

and let it cause righteousness to spring up also;

I the LORD have created it...

¹⁸ For thus says the LORD,

who created the heavens

(he is God!),

who formed the earth and made it

(he established it;

he did not create it a chaos,

he formed it to be inhabited!):

'I am the LORD, and there is no other.'...

²¹ Declare and present your case;
 let them take counsel together!
 Who told this long ago?
 Who declared it of old?
 Was it not I, the LORD?
 And there is no other god besides me,
 a righteous God and a Saviour;
 there is none besides me.

²² 'Turn to me and be saved,
 all the ends of the earth!
 For I am God, and there is no other.

²³ By myself I have sworn,
 from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness
 a word that shall not return:
 'To me every knee shall bow,
 every tongue shall swear.'

²⁴ 'Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me,
 are righteousness and strength;
 to him shall come and be ashamed,
 all who were incensed against him.

²⁵ In the LORD all the offspring of Israel
 shall triumph and glory.'

Reflection

THE PHRASE *Rorate cœli de super* is hard to render in English. In the translation we use for the Advent Prose it comes out as 'Drop down ye heavens from above'. In today's reading the verse is:

⁸ **Shower, O heavens, from above,
 and let the skies rain down righteousness;
 let the earth open, that salvation may sprout forth,
 and let it cause righteousness to spring up also. (v8)**

A Messianic prophecy which talks about rainfall is a less accessible metaphor for us nowadays, perhaps, than the idea of salvation 'sprouting

forth'. In context, whatever the metaphor, the salvation and the righteousness are the consequence of Cyrus King of Persia defeating the Babylonians and restoring God's people to Jerusalem. And yet, even within the limits of that one historical event, here prophesied, is a much more momentous event, the coming of the Messiah. It's a bit like a prophecy that a child might go on to be Captain of the School only for the child to develop into being winner of a Nobel prize. To be fair, the prophet glimpses the bigger picture and its possibilities because he is envisaging God being worshipped as God throughout the earth, a Saviour for all who turn to him. This is the vocation of Israel to be a light to the nations (Is 42:6; Is 49:6), a theme taken up by Simeon when Jesus is presented in the Temple (Lk 2:32). The Messiah as the glory of Israel and the light to lighten the gentiles is a favourite theme of St Luke who makes reference to the same idea in Acts 13:47 and Acts 26:33. We are looking for a Saviour, a Saviour to whom every knee will bow. (v.23).

O Sapientia [O Wisdom]

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence. *Sir 24:3; Wis 8:1*

Thursday 17th December

Reading

Genesis 49:2, 8-10

The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah

² Assemble and hear, O sons of Jacob,
and hearken to Israel your father...

⁸ Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
your father's sons shall bow down before you.

⁹ Judah is a lion's whelp;
from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down, he couched as a lion,
and as a lioness; who dares rouse him up?

¹⁰ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,

until he comes to whom it belongs;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Reflection

THE ADVENT Antiphons, sometimes known as 'the Great "O"s', are seven titles of the Messiah, distilled from the Old Testament. He is Adonai, or leader of the House of Israel. He is the Root of Jesse, from which sprung the House of David. He is the Key of David, unlocking the gates of death. He is the Morning Star, heralding the Dawn. He is the King of the Nations and he is Emmanuel, God-with-us. What is striking about all these descriptions is that implicitly they are descriptions of Almighty God. The final one – God-with-us – celebrates the central theological truth for Christians that God in Christ took our flesh and dwelt – or rather 'dwells' – in our midst. In today's first reading, we are right back in pre-history, in the time of the patriarchs. Here Jacob, known as Israel, is saying farewell to his sons. He is dying but not before prophesying the fortunes of Judah. He would have had no way of knowing or guessing that the future of Judah would present himself as the Son of God but he knew that the sceptre of Judah, the symbol of kingship, would be one to whom 'shall be the obedience of the peoples'.

O Adonai

Friday 18th December

O Adonai, and leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.
cf Ex 3:2, 24:12

Reading

Jeremiah 23:5-8

The Righteous Branch of David

⁵ 'Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

⁷ 'Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when men shall no longer say, "As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, " ⁸ but "As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them." Then they shall dwell in their own land.'

Reflection

IN THE seven days leading up to Christmas, one might imagine that the readings would match the Advent Antiphon of the day. Today the Antiphon is O Adonai and point us further back to God revealing himself to Moses in the burning bush and on Mount Sinai. The first reading, by contrast, refers us to the Son of David, who saves Judah and Israel, bringing them back from exile back to their own land. This second Exodus – this time not from Egypt but from Babylon – becomes a new and important point of reference, more important, Jeremiah seems to say, than the first Exodus. God the deliverer is described as 'The Lord our Righteousness' (v.6) which is a play on the name Zedekiah, the puppet king who rebelled against the Babylonians, leading to the destruction of Jerusalem.

O Radix [O Root of Jesse]

O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples; before you kings will shut their mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer: Come and deliver us, and delay no longer. *cf Is 11:10, 45:14, 52:15; Rom 15:12*

Saturday 19th December

Reading

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25

The story of Sampson

² And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Mano'ah; and his wife was barren and had no children. ³ And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Behold, you are barren and have no children; but you shall conceive and bear a son. ⁴ Therefore beware, and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, ⁵ for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall

come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.' ⁶ Then the woman came and told her husband, 'A man of God came to me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible; I did not ask him whence he was, and he did not tell me his name; ⁷ but he said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son; so then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth to the day of his death.'

²⁴ And the woman bore a son, and called his name Samson; and the boy grew, and the LORD blessed him. ²⁵ And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him.

Reflection

AS WE continue to reflect on the way the Hebrew Scriptures point towards the coming of the Messiah, we take in a couple of the heroes of Israelite history. These heroes – Samson today and Samuel on 22nd December – are shadows of what is to come. Samson is the mighty warrior who slays Goliath. Samuel is the great prophet who anoints David as King of Israel. We see the specific – Samson's fight against the Philistines and David's reign over Israel – as pointing towards something more universal. The Messiah – Jesus – will fight against sin and death, and like Samson, lose his life in the process. The Messiah – Jesus – like Samuel will establish a new Kingdom, not in time but in eternity.

Advent Antiphons

Sung before and after the Magnificat at Evening Prayer and used as Alleluia verses at Mass

17th December – O Sapientia

O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end to the other mightily, and sweetly ordering all things: Come and teach us the way of prudence. *Sir 24:3; Wis 8:1*

18th December – O Adonai

O Adonai, and leader of the House of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm. *cf Ex 3:2, 24:12*

19th December – O Radix Jesse

O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples; before you kings will shut their mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer: Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.

cf Is 11:10, 45:14, 52:15; Rom 15:12

20th December – O Clavis David

O Key of David and sceptre of the House of Israel; you open and no one can shut; you shut and no one can open: Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house, those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. *cf Is 22:22, 42:7*

21st December – O Oriens

O Morning Star, splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness: Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. *cf Mal 4:2*

22nd December – O Rex Gentium

O King of the nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one: Come and save the human race, which you fashioned from clay. *cf Is 28:16; Eph 2:14*

23rd December – O Emmanuel

O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Saviour: Come and save us, O Lord our God. *cf Is 7:14*

*The first letters of the Latin titles taken backwards (E-R-O-C-R-A-S) form a Latin acrostic - **Ero Cras** which translates as "Tomorrow, I will be [there]", mirroring the theme of the antiphons.*